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ABSTRACT

This study describes what some urban teachers at one school believe and know about literacy teaching and learning, and relates what they believe and know to two contrasting viewpoints about the way students become literate (mechanism and contextualism). Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to create summaries of teacher beliefs and knowledge and construct a composite school-level picture of literacy teaching and learning across the following four dimensions: (1) context; (2) teacher instructional role; (3) student learner role; and (4) context. Seventeen full-time teachers (77 percent African Americans) from 1 medium-sized urban elementary school in a large midwestern city participated. The study's 3 phases included group administration of 2 written measures to the 17 teachers, a 1-hour individual interview with 13 teachers, and observation of and in-depth interviews with 2 focus teachers who represented the mechanistic or contextual perspective, respectively. Across the four dimensions, most of the teachers embrace a more mechanistic perspective on teaching and learning. However, they embrace several aspects of both the contextualist and mechanist perspectives. The context of a poverty-stricken urban neighborhood seems to have an overwhelming influence on what the teachers do in the classroom. Included are 42 references, 4 tables, and 3 figures outlining the 4 dimensions. (RLC)

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Urban teachers' beliefs and knowledge about literacy teaching and learning: An examination from Mechanistic and Contextualistic perspectives

by

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OBJECTIVES

The purposes of the study were (1) to describe and explain what some urban teachers at one school believe and know about literacy teaching and learning and (2) to relate what teachers believe and know to two perspectives- Mechanism and Contextualism (Pepper, 1942). Seventeen teachers in one urban elementary school participated in the study. Both quantitative and qualitative measures were used to create summaries of teacher beliefs and knowledge, and to build a composite school-level picture of literacy teaching and learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Helping urban, economically disadvantaged children become literate participants in our society is an important goal for our schools. Although schools alone cannot solve the complex social and economic problems in urban neighborhoods, their efforts can begin to break the cycle of disadvantage. Teaching urban students to read and write is certainly a laudable and worthy goal. Promoting literacy reduces the risk for disadvantaged children. When students learn to read and write well, schools become "risk breakers" not "risk makers" (Allen & Mason, 1989; Schorr, 1989). Even though recently there has been improvement in urban students' standardized test scores (NAEP, 1986; New York Times, May, 1991), teachers still find their students fall behind grade level year after year. Some educators and researchers believe that one solution to the continuing problem of urban children's underachievement is to change current classroom instruction (Delpit, 1988; Reyes, 1991).

For all the hope that has been pinned on improving the lives of the children through schooling, we know little about what happens in urban classrooms. A way to begin to understand urban literacy instruction is to listen to the teachers and to analyze what they say. After all, a significant responsibility of the teacher is to understand and shape the classroom social and instructional context (Florio-Ruane, 1989). What teachers believe and know about the classroom context will influence what they say and

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do in classrooms (Peterson & Clark, 1986; Peterson, Fennema, Carpenter, & Loef , 1989; Anderson, Englert, Raphael & Stevens, 1991). In turn, the classroom social and instructional context influences children's literacy learning. Knowledge of what teachers believe and know about urban literacy instruction can lead to improvement in children's literacy learning.

Being literate means the individual is able to read and write and communicate in a variety of societal contexts. Resnick (1990) defines literacy as a "set of cultural practices that people engage in around texts." To become literate one engages in social interaction with others. Literacy teaching and learning occurs continuously while students are talking, listening, and relating as well as reading and writing. Therefore, a description of literacy teaching and learning should not be limited to reading and writing instruction alone. Likewise, a study of teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy teaching and learning needs to tap the several dimensions of a teacher's practice.

In an attempt to capture the multidimensional nature of literacy teaching and learning, the study investigated four broad dimensions: how the teacher organizes the instructional content (Content), what instructional role the teacher values (Teacher Instructional Role), how the teacher views students' contribution to learning (Student Learner Role), and how the teacher integrates the classroom and the neighborhood context (Context) (derived from what Schwab calls "the commonplaces of schooling"- Schwab, 1962; Anderson, 1989; Hewson & Hewson, 1989). The breath of these four dimensions helps to explicate instructional decisions made when literacy teaching and learning is seen within the dynamic and multidimensional classroom context.

Teaching contexts are not the same. There are considerable differences when teaching is considered in suburban versus urban settings. Indeed, within urban settings many questions remain about how to improve literacy instruction for at risk populations (Schorr, 1988; Mitchell, 1989; Finn, 1991). There is disagreement about the value of current practices like process writing (Graves, 1983; Englert, Raphael, Anderson and Fear, 1990) in urban settings

with at risk populations (Delpit, 1989; Reyes, 1991). One way to begin to understand the problems in urban literacy instruction is to listen more carefully to what the teachers themselves say about teaching literacy in that context, and, then, compare what the teachers say with teaching and learning perspectives that underlie current instructional methods.

For the study, the perspectives that underlie teaching and learning literacy were classified into two different constructs. Although this appears to be a far too simple way to characterize instructional perspectives, the constructs were considered to be points on a continuum and provided a way to talk about and compare teacher beliefs and knowledge in relation to instructional methods often presented in staff development programs to teachers. One perspective was labeled, the Mechanistic perspective; the other was labeled, the Contextualist perspective (Pepper, 1942). Pepper (1942) described these two perspectives as two different world views. A description of the two perspectives as applied to teaching and learning is presented in Figure 1. A breakdown of the perspectives across the four dimensions of the study is presented in Figure 2.

Mechanism and Contextualism represent contrasting viewpoints about the way students become literate. Undergirding each perspective are different assumptions about teaching and learning. The two perspectives, Mechanism and Contextualism, underlie different curricula, teacher preparation programs and staff development programs which purport to improve student literacy.

In the study, the two perspectives, Mechanism and Contextualism, were used to analyze urban teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy teaching and learning across four dimensions: (1) context; (2) teacher instructional role; (3) student learner role; and (4) context. The research question was:

What are urban teachers beliefs and knowledge about literacy teaching and learning in relation to two perspectives, mechanism and contextualism?

METHODS

Subjects and site. Seventeen full-time, certified teachers volunteered to participate in the study. Subjects all came from one medium-sized urban elementary school, Washington Elementary (a pseudonym), in a large midwestern city. Seventy-one percent of the certified teaching staff at the school were African-American. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers who volunteered for the study were African-American. The average number of years that the teachers in the sample had been at the school was 14.67 years (average overall teaching experience was 18.29). Eight of the teachers in the sample had been at the school for over 20 years.

The school was a designated Chapter 1 school and had the highest number of free lunches in the district (out of total 167 elementary schools). The highest number of free lunches indicated that the school more than likely had the lowest socioeconomic status in the district. Twelve out of 20 houses three blocks either side of the school were burned-out, boarded-up hulls. There was no playground equipment. The students hauled the basketball backboards out at lunchtime and hooked them up on the walls of the building to play basketball. There was no librarian and no library at the school although the bookmobile came by once a week. Due to the untiring efforts of the principal to get additional funding, there was a computer lab and a computer lab instructor. From Chapter 1 money the principal had hired a full-time truant officer to visit homes and get the children to come to school. Attendance at the time of the study was up to 95% daily. Out of over 600 students, approximately 98% were African-American. According to the principal, approximately one-third of the children moved into or out of the school in any one year. Mean grade level scores on the California Achievement Test in 1990 indicated that kindergarten and first grade were the only grades where the majority of students were at or above grade level. Following these grades there was a gradual and continual decline in the test scores with as few as 17% at end of fifth grade and 20% at end of the sixth grade at or above grade level on reading comprehension on the California Achievement Test.

Instruments. There were three phases in the study. Phase 1 consisted of group administration of two written measures to seventeen teachers. Phase 2 consisted of a one-hour individual interviews with thirteen teachers. Phase 3 consisted of observation and in-depth interviews of two focus

teachers who, based on quantitative data, represented the Mechanistic or the Contextualist perspective, respectively. The results of the Phase 3 interviews of the focus teachers will not be reported in this paper.

Instruments- Phase 1- Group measures.

In Phase 1, seventeen teachers completed two written instruments: (1) A modified version of the Theoretical Orientation toward Reading, designed by Deford (1986), herein referred to as M-TORP, and (2) the Teacher Control-Student Autonomy Scale (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981), referred to as the Student Autonomy Scale. The first Likert-type instrument, the M-TORP, was designed to measure teacher's theoretical orientation toward reading in two categories: reductionistic and holistic (i.e., with expert advice, the phonics and word strategy items of the TORP were grouped into a "reductionistic" category and the whole language items of the TORP and new social constructivist items were grouped into an "holistic" category). The 32-item M-TORP measured the teachers' theoretical orientation toward one dimension of literacy instruction-content, i.e., teaching goals and instructional methods. The items of the M-TORP were recoded so that a high score represented a reductionistic perspective. All the items were coded according to their relationship to the reductionist orientation. A score of 5 meant that the respondent's answer was consonant with a reductionistic perspective on teaching reading. A score of 1 meant that the respondent's answer was not consonant with the reductionistic perspective and, therefore, assumed to be more consonant with the holistic perspective. Teachers were then ranked according to their score on the reductionistic scale. The higher the score on the scale indicated a stronger preference toward reductionistic reading goals and methods associated with Mechanism; conversely, the lower the score on the reductionistic scale indicated a stronger preference toward holistic reading goals and methods associated with Contextualism.

The second instrument, the Student Autonomy Scale, placed teacher responses along a continuum with a single score made by subtracting teacher control scores from student autonomy scores (Deci, et al. 1981). This instrument was designed to measure teacher's preference for asserting adult control versus supporting child autonomy. According to Deci et al. (1981) closely

related to this scale was teachers' use of extrinsic rewards and of controlling-type communication versus teachers' use of intrinsic motivation and informing-type communication. In the study, the Student Autonomy Scale examined teacher beliefs and knowledge about the second and third dimensions of classroom practice: teacher instructional role and student learner role. Mechanism and Contextualism differ in the role the teacher and the student play in learning. Mechanism focuses more on the teacher as the sole arbitrator and planner of classroom activities, and the single evaluator and rewarder of student success. Students were expected to conform to teacher expectations because the teacher needed to exert control over classroom outcomes. Teachers who scored low on the Student Autonomy Scale were considered to be more congruent with Mechanism. Contextualism focuses more on the transactions between student and teacher about classroom activities. The teacher is more of a guide, a facilitator and a supporter of student learning. An explicit goal of the teacher would be increasing student independence and self-reliance by the end of the year. Contextualism focuses more on the development of student voice and importance of student meaning-making in classroom dialogue. Because Contextualism assumes that teachers need to help students become more self-reliant and independent ands determine many of their own learning outcomes (Palincsar & Brown, 1989), teachers who scored high on the Student Autonomy Scale were considered more congruent with Contextualism.

Instrument: Phase 2- Individual interviews.

In Phase 2, thirteen of the seventeen teachers volunteered to be interviewed regarding their instruction of reading and writing. The structured interview had three sections: (1) teacher beliefs/knowledge about the four dimensions of classroom practice (content, teacher role, student role, social context) as they apply to the teaching of reading and writing, (2) teacher responses to value-laden beliefs regarding instruction in the urban context with African-American economically disadvantaged children, (3) teacher responses to two written dialogues of classroom reading lessons which demonstrated teaching using a direct instruction model versus teaching the same content using a more dialogic model of interaction. The dialogues in section 3 of the interview were assumed to represent an aspect of the two perspectives, Mechanism and Contextualism, respectively.

In the study the multiple data collection methods described above included two kinds of data: one set of data sources was more congruent with quantitative analysis, whereas another set of sources was more congruent with qualitative analysis. The quantitative sources used in Phase 1 provided data on three of the four literacy dimensions: content, teacher instructional role and student learner role. The quantitative measures did not include information related to the fourth dimension: context . On the other hand, the qualitative interviews used in Phase 2 included data relevant to all four dimensions. The examination of teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy teaching and learning using both quantitative and qualitative methods accomplished several purposes. First, the use of multiple methods reflected the multi-faceted definition of literacy. The broad definition of literacy learning implied that literacy teaching and learning is not limited to what happens just during reading instruction. Other events in the classroom contributed to students' learning the cultural practices associated with literacy. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described the foundation of literacy thus: "Literacy presupposes the existence of a shared symbol system that mediates information between the individual's mind and external events." Students learn a set of cultural practices through a shared symbol system. When students become literate, they communicate with others through this symbol system to gain information, to accomplish goals, and to participate in the larger society. "Society determines, however, how literacy is defined, instructed and evaluated" (Englert & Palincsar, 1992). Given our broad definition, we assumed that teachers made decisions about literacy teaching and learning all day long in a variety of contexts. Teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy influenced instructional decisions in a variety of contexts across the school day. Therefore, using multiple instruments with multiple dimensions tapped several texts and contexts of literacy instruction.

Second, the multiple methods with multiple dimensions allowed the creation of richer descriptions of the teacher's practice. For example, analysis of the qualitative instrument, the structured interview, revealed that Teacher L, a primary grade teacher, seemed to be more oriented toward Mechanistic perspective in her teaching of reading and writing.

> We don't teach reading skills per se, but we teach readiness skills (at her level). We get the kids in tune with alphabet recognition... Putting the letters together is part of the reading and phonics. So they know that they have to put a lot of the letters (together) in order to put together a word.(Teacher L)

The M-TORP reflected the results of the qualitative analysis by her rank in second place on the reductionistic scale (Table 1). Her position as second from the lowest on the Student Autonomy Scale seemed to indicate her preference for teacher control over student autonomy as well (Table 2). Interviewing teachers about the multiple literacy dimensions captured teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy instruction and gave us some of the reasons why teachers believed what they did. Multiple methods of investigating the multiple literacy dimensions had a better chance of rooting out the several reasons that a teacher may have for his/her current practice of literacy instruction.

Procedures. With the support of the principal and vice-principal in the school, the group measures in Phase 1 were administered at an all staff meeting. All interviews were conducted at the school. The principal often provided a building substitute to cover the classroom so that the interview could take place. Sometimes the interview was conducted during the noon hour. The researcher was in the school 4 to 5 days a week over the last six weeks of school in May and June. The researcher was familiar with the staff and the administration because over the last three years the researcher had been involved in the school as a staff developer on several occasions. However, during the school year prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher visited the school only once.

Data Analysis. To summarize the Phase 1 data, the M-TORP (Table 1) and the Student Autonomy Scale (Table 2), a mean on each scale was calculated for each teacher and the teacher scores were ranked. Then, the teacher's scores on the two scales were correlated to determine the statistical significance of the relationship between the two measures.

The individual interviews of the thirteen teachers, the Phase 2 data, were transcribed and read four times in their original form to develop a case summary for each teacher. In this initial

set of readings, the interview was read one time for each of the four dimensions to capture teacher beliefs and knowledge about that dimension across the whole interview. The four dimensions of literacy teaching and learning were: (1) content; (2) teacher instructional role; (3) student learner role; and (4) context. According to the definition and aspects of each Dimension (Table 4), the relevant quotations from the interview were chunked under one or more of the appropriate dimensions. Then an interview summary was written for each teacher. In this summary, certain themes that seemed consistent for that teacher were emphasized, but the data remained separated by dimension. The original quotations from the interview were used as evidence for the themes in the summaries. Two outside readers also read 3 and 2 interviews, respectively. They followed the guidelines created for separation and classification of the interview into the dimensions and classified the interview statements into the four dimensions. There was general agreement between the outside readers and the researcher that the dimensions were clear and workable. Also, there was general agreement about the quotations that were selected to be included in the summary description of each teacher.

Following the compilation of the data from the interviews into thirteen case summaries, the researcher then read all of the case summaries of the interviews across each dimension. The purpose of this reading was to create a case description of teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy teaching and learning at one urban school, Washington Elementary. The school case included both the majority and minority themes that existed across all thirteen cases under each dimension. After writing this case description of the school across the four dimensions, the researcher compared that school-level description to the two perspectives on teaching and learning, Mechanistic and Contextualist, looking for consistencies and contrasts between the teachers' practice and the perspectives. The results of that final school-level analysis are presented here.

RESULTS

The four dimensions of literacy teaching and learning served the purpose of helping the researcher analyze the results. However, in creating the case description of the school and

presenting the results, the four dimensions were collapsed into one description of the teachers' beliefs and knowledge about literacy instruction. There were four conclusions made based on the interviews and the Phase 1 data. These were:

1. Most teachers at Washington Elementary School had a conception of literacy teaching and learning which emphasized the need to learn simpler processes before one can learn more complex processes. These beliefs are more consonant with a Mechanistic perspective toward literacy teaching and learning than a Contextualist perspective.

2. Most teachers at Washington Elementary School emphasized the need for teacher control and dominance over student decision-making and independence. These beliefs tend to be more consonant with a Mechanistic perspective on teaching and learning than a Contextualist perspective.

3. The stated reasons for the emphasis on simpler learning processes and for the concern with teacher control seem to be a response to the classroom and neighborhood context. These reasons seem to be more consonant with a Contextualist perspective on literacy teaching and learning than a Mechanistic perspective.

4. Most teachers at Washington Elementary School recognize the importance of social development for the children. They respond to student personal and social needs through their personal interactions with the students. Their response to students on a personal level and concern for the whole child is consonant with both the Mechanistic and Contextualist perspectives.

In each of the four sections below, the central conclusion is restated. Then, there are a series of labeled sections which present the data which supports that conclusion.

1. Most teachers at Washington Elementary School had a conception of literacy teaching and learning which emphasized the need to learn simpler processes before one can learn more complex processes. These beliefs are more consonant with a Mechanistic perspective toward literacy teaching and learning than a Contextualist perspective.

Most teachers at Washington Elementary School had a Mechanistic orientation toward literacy teaching and learning. This orientation basically held true for almost all aspects of each

of the four dimensions. Table 4 presents a summary of teachers' beliefs and knowledge about literacy in relation to Mechanistic and Contextualist perspectives. It should be noted here that not all teachers at the school subscribe to one perspective totally. What is presented here is a description of both the majority and the minority viewpoints regarding literacy instruction at one urban school.

What follows is a description of how this mechanistic conception is played out in stated teacher beliefs and knowledge about classroom literacy teaching and learning. One of the tenets of Mechanism as it is applied to psychology is that "complex mental states are regarded as analyzable without residue into mental elements of a relatively small number of kinds" (p. 218, Pepper, 1942). Gavelek and Palincsar (1988) describe Pepper's mechanistic worldview where the individual is "analogous to a machine in that it may be reduced to discrete parts or components." In classrooms this could be translated into complex learning is best developed only after the student has gained at least a fundamental understanding of simpler learning processes. To almost all of the teachers at Washington Elementary, the simpler learning that is fundamental and essential to reading is an understanding of phonics, an ability to decode, and the learning of vocabulary. The simpler learning that is fundamental to writing is an ability to spell, capitalize and punctuate and, to some, the ability to write a complete sentence.

There are several examples from the interviews which describe the emphasis on simpler learning processes that are considered to be foundational to literacy learning. All of the implied practices behind these beliefs and knowledge influence student perceptions of what it takes to become literate and what it means to be literate in the larger society. The interview results have been clustered under several topic sentences which are labeled with letters.

a. Teachers in the lower elementary generally support phonics as a "basis" for language learning. Most describe learning to read as a linear, sequential process where the student needs to accumulate fundamental understandings such as phonics and vocabulary knowledge before they can comprehend.

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I break my teaching up into pieces. In (my grade level) in September I teach phonics. I build the fundamentals. In spring I put the skills together and teach comprehension (G).

I feel there has to be some system. (The basal series) is used throughout the school. It gives them the phonics they need all year. Phonics and vocabulary development are very, very important. We have it in the workbook. We have it in the drill, in the seat work and the vocabulary test and that is very good for them and for me. (H)

I think phonics is the first step to reading. They need to know how to decode. They need to know how to sound out words, put the sounds together. (N)

Phonics is often learned in isolation from texts and reading.

Well you have to learn your consonant sounds, your vowel sounds.... to retain information and not lose it once you look at it. Some children do that (lose the information), that is why you have to keep going over and over and over. Consonant sounds and vowels really helps.(K)

b. The district-provided basal is primary and single source of reading instruction for many teachers. All teachers (except the preschool teacher) use the basal for reading instruction. They have a positive response to the basal reader, worksheets and skillsheets. They generally agree that it "works fine"(J), or "engages all the skills.(A)" One teacher likes it because it integrates well with other subjects, "It goes along with the other language arts subjects taught. (C)" Most teachers follow the district curriculum in teaching from the basal. One teacher, however, "I have found myself jumping all over the books, the core of the text to get stories that might fit in that I have overheard on the playground or something that just kinda correlates with what is going on in their world."

c. The upper level teachers tended to emphasize vocabulary development as a key to reading. "The most important thing in teaching reading is good coverage of the vocabulary.(A)"

d. Lower level elementary teachers emphasize that before students can learn to read and write, they need to be ready. "First you have to know how to hold the pencil. That is important because some of us grab the pencil....the little muscles in the fingers haven't developed enough on how to

hold it correctly so, you start little and we work our way up. (L)" Two lower level elementary teachers expressed the idea that learning to write is only possible after one learns how to read. "Writing is separate from reading and it comes naturally. After you learn to read, writing comes naturally. (H)"

e. Teachers described the teaching of writing at Washington Elementary as a difficult process. For most of the teachers good writing is mastering the technical skills of capitalization, punctuation and spelling. "I want them to be able to recognize capital letter words and be able to know if a period or a question mark is in a sentence. By the time June gets here, I drill, drill, drill on them and it doesn't register and stick with them. (K). "The difficult thing about teaching writing is that everyone wants you to spell everything out. I come away feeling like I am in a million pieces. (F)" "They need sentence writing to start with..., then, go to paragraph writing but they have to be able to write a complete sentence first. (N) "I don't go through that extensive writing process with them because I don't want them to get discouraged. (E)

f. Not all teachers at Washington Elementary shared the sequential, skills oriented view of learning to read and write. Two teachers on the staff seem to be more Contextualist in their overall approach to reading and writing instruction. One teacher explicitly stated her belief that reading and writing are connected, "I can't separate reading and writing. It is just part of the process...I think basically I incorporate that writing in what they are doing with that reading. (M)" The other teacher said in relation to writing goals, "I would have to say, creativity and purpose again. We have a general purpose in mind and knowing who your audience would be (is important).(B)"

2. Most teachers at Washington Elementary School emphasized the need for teacher control and dominance over student decision-making and independence. These beliefs tend to be more consonant with a Mechanistic perspective on teaching and learning than a Contextualist perspective.

a. Teachers make the rules. The teacher is boss. "They must see you as the one in charge. (N)" "In the first of the year when I come in, I set down the ground rules....You almost have to be cruel to get them to understand that you are in charge. (C)" There was no mention of regular classroom

jobs or students having a role in creating classroom rules. This orientation toward classroom control by the teacher seems to be more consonant with the Mechanistic perspective.

Only one teacher mentioned that the students had any input on classroom governance. She (B) occasionally allows the students to handle classroom discipline in a game they call "Court". She notes that the discipline that they give out is usually "more severe" than her own.

b. A good classroom is a well-planned classroom (A, B, H, J, L, M). A well-planned classroom could be Mechanistic or Contextualist depending on how the plans are conceived and implemented. A majority of the teachers recognized that the students need a structure and organization in their lives. Several teachers mentioned the need for "organization (A)", "management (M)", "structure (L, J)" and "planning (B)" in the classroom.

c. Several teachers wanted control over outcomes in the classroom because they felt pressure to do well on the district-mandated testing or because they gauged their teaching by an external standard, the need to get children on grade level.

> It is really important for the children to learn to read because of the testing that we have here. When they are able to read, they are able to read the test booklets, they are able to read directions and follow them. I would love to see them finish the (primary) grade level book, and be ready for the second grade level....It is the way of school systems, of evaluating. But, you have to be evaluated throughout life in order to see if you are accomplishing anything. (K)
>
> I would like my children to comprehend at grade level (G)
>
> ...getting these children at grade level, helping them to function well in the next grade like I do every year. That is one of my major goals, help them to function properly and stand on their own two feet for next year. (D)

To several teachers it was important for the children to learn something in order to "give it back to you.(D, E)" The concern for external standards and the interest in helping children learn codified knowledge rather than problem solving and creating some knowledge of their own is more consonant with the Mechanistic perspective than the Contextualist perspective.

3. The reasons for the emphasis on simpler learning processes and for the concern with teacher control seem to be a response to the classroom and neighborhood context. These reasons seem to be more consonant with a Contextualist perspective on literacy teaching and learning than a Mechanistic perspective.

The reasons for this emphasis on simpler goals and methods of teaching reading and writing may have to do with the teacher's perception of the children themselves and what they need.

a. It should be noted here that more that half of the sample have been at the school over 20 years. Several noted in the interview how they have seen the neighborhood change and the increasing needs that the children have. "These children have the greatest needs of any of the children I have worked with...I guess when you think of education or teaching, I might think of dealing with the whole child and, as a whole child, these children have many areas where they have needs. Physically, socially, medically, which need to be dealt with."

> So gradually it went down; it wasn't fast....I'd say about the last seven years, we started seeing more vacant house, more drugs, like the kids all know about drugs around here... more vacant lots..more fires, burned out houses. It has reached the point where the immediate neighborhood has an awful lot of burned out houses....Out of 24 students now, I only have one that pays for lunch and he is moving to the suburbs this summer. So, it gradually came. So it gradually became you could see it in the lunch count, you could see it in the children not having two parents and you could see it in the neighborhood immediately around here- the burned out buildings, the vacant lots and the vacant buildings and the crime here. It got more and more prevalent for the children to tell you in the morning about the crime the night before....But what I am saying is, if a child comes into my room and tells me that there was a fire on their street last night, that doesn't faze me, we go on with our work. If they tell me their father was

shot or someone was shooting at their house, I might ask them a little more about it... (H)

b. Over and over again the teachers emphasized that the students lack experience and concomitant background knowledge about the world. "You cannot assume or presume that they know anything. ....A word that you presume is common language, they don't know. They haven't been exposed to it....They just, so many of them, I use the expression, 'live in a vacuum'. You know, as far as vocabulary development or concepts of different things that we presume that everyone knows. (A)" Five of the thirteen teachers interviewed said that they believe that many of the children have never been out of the neighborhood. School field trips are the only opportunity they have to get out of the neighborhood. "Most children write from their experience and imagination and if you don't have the experience, you can't have the imagination. So you have to create the imagination and take them on trips and show them the movies or do something" (C) For one teacher, a teacher needs to assess background knowledge "for whatever academic area that your working in because their prior knowledge is sorely lacking. You as the professional have to make up the slack or do the best that you can. (E)"

All of the teachers interviewed emphasized the lack of background knowledge that students bring to school tasks. A particularly poignant example was when an upper elementary teacher assigned an autobiography to her students.

...Chapter One would be from my birth to three years old and "Mrs. (Teacher A), I don't know what to write'. I said, 'You know you'll have to ask your mom. She's the one that knows.' Well after about a week of this, 'My mother says she can't remember anything.' So literally, see some of them, not all, have written some darling things so far, but there are some children, you know, their life, like I said, is a vacuum....I would like them to have a picture page, ya know, labeled, this is so and so at two years old, (I hear), 'nobody keeps picture of me.' There are probably 14 or 15 (of my 30 students) that just have written just one loose leaf page so far." "Well, because I haven't even started telling them how their life is so different from anyone else's especially with them as the main character. And, um,

on their birthday, was there a blizzard? Was grandma with you?and, you know, that type of thing, and what did you do what was your favorite toy? (They say) 'I didn't have any toys.' But so I know that they have gone home and they have led me to feel that they have gone home, I told them to interview mom, she's the expert on your birth and what you were like in that first or second year of your life. Call her family and ask her. 'She doesn't know.' (A)

According to some teachers the lack of experience and background knowledge shows up in language development.

I can't put my finger on why, most groups of five year olds have a lot to say and it might not make any sense but they have a lot to say. They usually have a pretty nice size vocabulary. They have words to describe things. They have names of things. Many of these children come and they don't have common names. they don't know the names of animals. They don't know the names of common objects....Communication is through gestures and pointing. I mean, I have lots of children that come in, they are nonverbal in here. I am not saying that they are nonverbal children. But it makes you wonder how much language, how much vocabulary they actually have. Identify simple objects, or follow simple directions. It is real common. (M)

And the children that end up in my room have very poor motor skills. The first area I ask is their name. They get points for getting the first and or last name, their age, their address and their birthday. Many children know their first name and that is it. (M)

There is no one there. I'm literally saying it that there are children I would imagine that born in some of these crack houses and the mother gave birth, stepped over them and kept on going. They have to go for themselves. The only language they hear, is that which is going in and out of the door. So when they come to school they are really unprepared (B).

c. <u>The teachers described the economic situation for most of their students and how it impacts the classroom.</u> Their students do not experience much success in their lives outside of school. Seven teachers (A,B,E,F, G,H,M) stated that the problems that they see in this neighborhood are based on

economics. "The differences I see with these children are mainly in terms of economics.... I have worked at other schools. I see the differences as working with some really poor, poor children with, um; they are at a real economic disadvantage. (M)" "It all boils down to a matter of economics. I think you see people in (an affluent suburb) who have washing machines. People here do not have washing machines. Children come to school with dirty clothes. (G)" "What they need is jobs. What they need is a chance for a little higher education, trades or whatever. To deny them the best possible education that you can give them or that they can get (is wrong). Teach them. I mean it is a matter of economics. We (our city) don't have businesses to speak of, we don't. We are not where the money is.... (F)"

> They (the children) don't have any need for education because most don't even feel that they will live to enjoy it. They see their parents dying, they are just wandering aimlessly themselves, aimlessly on the street, what is education going to do for them, what could you possibly do?(B)

d. The teachers believe that the way out of this situation lies in education. One of the reasons that they emphasize basic learning processes rather than literature, for example, has to do with the the correct language the students need to hear and learn. Over 90% of the students at Washington Elementary are African-American. Ten of the teachers who volunteered to be interviewed for the study are African-American. Five teachers from the whole group interviewed stated that the children know or should know two languages- a "Black dialect (D, B, M, E, F)" and "general American language". For others, the students may bring a language to school but it is really "slanguage (N, K)". For two teachers (one white and one African-American) "rap" is nothing at all, "it is something they made up." All teachers believe that the students need to "improve", "correct", and change their language. They need to learn "proper English (A,H, J)", "general American language (G,M)", in order to get along in the "real world (C,D,E, H, L)". The desire for those African-American teachers is to prepare the children to make it in the real world. As one teacher stated: "I think it is a real tough decision (to ignore the Black dialect) but you don't go

ahead (in life), you don't go to a corporate board room saying 'yo baby' and you had better know that. (F)"

4. Most teachers at Washington Elementary School recognize the importance of social development for the children. They respond to student personal and social needs through their interactions with the students. Their response to students on a personal level and concern for the whole child is consonant with both the Mechanistic and Contextualist perspectives.

Contextualism emphasized the role of the social interaction as influencing, contributing and even, determining the quality and complexity of one's thinking. In general, it was not in the teaching of reading and writing, however, where the teachers' seemed to recognize the importance of social interactions in the development of thinking. It was in the area of social cognition and interaction where the teachers responded to the children's context and used the classroom context to teach students. What they taught was "etiquette (D)", values and survival skills. The teachers did what they could to help students cope with the tide of poverty, drugs and even, death that is part of the lives of their children. Both the Mechanistic and Contextualist perspectives on classroom teaching and learning include caring for students as a rationale for teacher beliefs and knowledge regarding literacy teaching and learning. When teachers talked the personal qualities that were important for a teacher at Washington Elementary, caring for the children was an essential component.

a. A good teacher at Washington Elementary "cares". Ten out of 13 used the word, "care", in their description of a good teacher. The greatest mistake a teacher could make at the school was "to not care. (F)" Nine out of 13 teachers used the word "care" in their description of a good teacher. Two teachers mentioned the specific other roles that a teacher might have to perform while a teacher at Washington Elementary:

> You should have an understanding of these kids. You should believe in them, and then they might need a little more love. You have to be mother, father, nurse, doctor. You have to be everything because they might not be getting that (C)
>
> First of all the teacher must make his/her number one concern the children. Forget the rest....make sure she keeps her mind on being about the business of being for the

children....You might be a doctor, a social worker, a counselor, a policeman.... it means really caring for the children. You have to be there for the children (G).

b. A teacher here needs to develop rapport and trust with the students and know the children's lives. Three out of thirteen teachers mentioned the need to be "flexible."

we are like a small family in the classroom and we are due to spend the coming year in the classroom together. There has to be trust. There has to be regard for each other, just like at home- hopefully at home, and all of those things and I stress how proud I am of them and, 'my gosh, how beautiful you look today.' They appreciate being appreciated. (A)

You know they (the parents) just lack the necessary parenting skills. I say now I really know the difference between parenting and babysitting and it makes a big difference. Parenting is quite involved and takes a lot of work. And you find yourself as a teacher too if you want to develop more of your trust with the kids. You have to do a lot of parenting (as a teacher) the same things that, um, you know are safe. For the children who come unprepared for school, no proper procedures, no respect for authority. Many of these children lack that, you have to teach the values....(B)

Children need to know precisely what is expected and they can't do, what they can do. And if you are real consistent about that, there is a trust, I think that takes place between them and the teacher.(M)

c. A good teacher talks and converses with the children. Seven teachers mentioned the need and desire that the children have for conversation because "I have been assuming again that quite often the circumstance that they go home to, that is, there is not a lot of oral discussion going on. That quite often they are told to be quiet or go stay outside or go outside... There is no one to communicate with them. (B)"

I think that is one of the absences in their lives (conversations). I don't think anyone talks with them. They scream at them, maybe, and probably curse at them, whatever, give orders, to sit down, whatever. Because they love to visit. They just love it and it all comes out when they talk. You can talk about balloons and they get all wound up (A).

> The size of their vocabulary is very small because they have not had a lot of conversations with people. Even if they watched TV all day, they would have remarkable language facility. I am just sure they would because they would be hearing these words, their language development range is extremely low. (M)

d. A good teacher knows that social development may be the most important thing that he or she do.

Many mentioned that we not only teach academics, we teach the students how to behave, how to get along with one another, how to not steal. The basic reason for this is, as one teacher stated

> Social development may be the most important part of what I do...They could be the world's best reader and not know how to get along with someone else. The problem is that our kids are killing each other. It is extremely important, maybe the most important, that they learn how to get along without resorting to violence. (F)

The basic method that most teachers seem to use to teach these values is to talk to the students.

> Yes, I talk to them about drugs. I talk to them about sex because they say things in there (her classroom) like they know everything that there is to be known. So I talk to them. I tell the boys, "You know, you don't want to have babies all over town." and, um, "You're getting a baby is not making you a man. A man can take care of a baby.' (C)

Several mentioned using the district-mandated Quest program to generate conversation about these issues and help the children problem-solve. One teacher has a 'success board' out in the hallway to remind children to "Make wise decisions, Be responsible, Get along with others.(N)" Another uses models of African-American athletes to inspire persistence (E).

Discussion

The thirteen teachers at one urban school shared their beliefs and knowledge about literacy teaching and learning. Their beliefs and knowledge about teaching and learning to read and write in this setting seem to be mediated by the context, the powerful context of a poverty-stricken urban neighborhood. The context seems to have an overwhelming influence on what the teachers do in the classroom. Day after day, year after year, the teachers have seen the neighborhood deteriorate. They have seen the increase in free lunches to where this school has the dubious honor of having more free lunches than any other school in the district. Free lunches translates as poverty, welfare dependency and in this case, it seems, drug-related activities.

The study is about how teachers think about teaching children to read and write, to become literate participants in our society. Over the four dimensions, most of the teachers at the school seem to embrace a more Mechanistic perspective on teaching and learning. They have good reasons for teaching that way. The students come to them knowing very little. Where does one begin? Does one begin simply and directly, hoping to give students success experiences by learning something simple they can hang on to? That seems like a reasonable response.

The teachers embrace several aspects of both the Contextualist and Mechanist perspective. The recognition of the need for students to converse and "visit" is more consonant with the Contextualist perspective. Caring for students seems to be a dominant focus for the teachers. Both the contextualist and the mechanistic perspectives could include caring for students. Yet, for most teachers neither of these valuable aspects of a classroom are linked to academic processes. It is important for teachers to feel and to be involved with their students' lives. We, as teacher educators and staff developers, have to get more clever about how to link caring and conversation to academic gains.

The most important thing urban schools can do for children is to help them become literate participants in the society. Changing current classroom literacy instruction seems to be one way to begin to break the cycle of disadvantage. Based on a combined analysis of the four dimensions of

classroom practice and the two theoretical perspectives on learning, the study described teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy instruction. This study sought to ground teacher beliefs and knowledge in the context. In addition, the study attempted to grapple with a broader definition of literacy beyond the teaching of reading and writing alone including the classroom social context in which literacy is learned. The study included teacher response to the context in which they find themselves. The study seems to show that teacher beliefs and knowledge are hammered out in a particular context in which the teachers find themselves. To ignore the context in which teacher beliefs and knowledge about literary are built is to ignore the societal dimension in which these teachers must work. To understand what teachers believe and know about teaching requires attention to some of the broader influences on instruction that come from beyond the classroom.

To be sure, teacher beliefs and knowledge are complex. Yet, the majority of the teachers in the study support a more Mechanistic perspective in teaching and learning. They have good reasons for doing so. They are faced with students who have a set of overwhelming needs. Outside efforts to improve schools are often based on either a Mechanistic or a Contextualistic perspective. In order to assist teachers in improving their practice, it is important for staff developers, educators and researchers to know the teachers they are instructing. The study gives insight into teachers' rationales for literacy instruction in one urban school. Without such knowledge, outside efforts in schools are doomed to failure because we do not know where teachers are starting from when we seek to help them improve their practice. Hopefully, the study will also contribute to understanding staff developers and teacher educators possess.

Figure 1

MECHANISTIC PERSPECTIVE on teaching and learning is a way of looking at teaching and learning that emphasizes complex learning processes are best understood and developed after one has gained at least a fundamental understanding of simpler learning processes. By defining and analyzing these simpler processes, more complex behavior can be explained. We can understand phenomena by describing their parts and discovering lawful relationships between them (Pepper, 1942, 1967). . Precepts in this perspective can be related to empirical/contextualism (Gersten, Carnine & Woodward, 1987), mechanism (Pepper, 1942; Heshusius, 1991, 1992), interaction (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Altman & Rogoff, 1987) and reductionism (Heshusius, 1991, 1992; Poplin, 1988). One characteristic of this perspective is to develop and rely upon an external set of standards to gauge progress (Heshusius, 1991). Errors are a crucial source of information as the teacher modifies instruction to help students learn the content the teacher expects the students to learn (Gerston, 1992). According to Gerston (1992), the two pillars of direct instruction are "empathy for student success and understanding of the need for clarity". Timely and correct feedback is an essential component in student learning. From the Mechanism perspective, learning can be defined as: " a relatively permanent change in behavior."

In classrooms, Mechanism perspectives on teaching and learning emphasize the study of discrete, observable and measurable outcomes as evidence of learning literacy. Classroom practices often associated with an underlying Mechanism perspective would be drill and practice, classroom recitation, direct instruction and Distar.

CONTEXTUALISM PERSPECTIVE: on teaching and learning is a way of looking at teaching and learning that emphasizes the role of the social in the development of thinking. Social constructivism is most closely associated with the work of Soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1934/1986). Precepts in this perspective can be related to constructivism (Piaget, 1955, 1970), contextualism (Pepper, 1949), transaction (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Altman & Rogoff, 1987) and holistic/constructivism (Heshusius, 1982, 1986; Poplin, 1988). Foundational to this perspective is that complex learning processes are best understood in the context in which they are learned. Social constructivism is an example of a cognitive learning theory. Cognitive theories, in general, emphasize complex intellectual processes such as thinking, language, and problem solving as major aspects of the learning process. Cognitive theorists emphasize how one organizes experience in a situation and the ways in which one learns alternative or more appropriate kinds of organizing experiences (Snelbecker, 1988). What distinguishes contextualism from other cognitive theories and from the Mechanism conceptions of learning and teaching is the inclusion and emphasis on the social aspect of learning. In fact, based on the work of Vygotsky (1934/1978), Englert and Palincsar(1991) emphasize that "society provides a critical influence on behavior and thought that guides participants as they engage in literacy interactions" . "Literacy is socially constructed by teachers and students as they engage in holistic and authentic activities and participate in mutually-constituted discourse (p.1)." From the Contextualism perspective, learning can be defined as: "the construction of new knowledge through the process of transformation and self-regulation" which happens in a dynamic and holistic psychological system and is subject to the influences of person and the environment. (Poplin, 1988; Altman & Rogoff, 1987)

In classrooms, the Contextualism perspective on teaching and learning focuses on the context in which literacy is learned. For example, classroom practices often associated with an underlying Contextualism perspective would be reciprocal teaching, process writing (author's chair, peer editing), language experience stories and collaborative problem solving.

Figure 2

DIMENSION #1 CONTENT..... aspects

GOAL: What does the teacher value as an outcome of his or her reading and writing instruction?

METHOD: What techniques, student activities and instructional practices does the teacher use in teaching reading and writing in the classroom?

MECHANISTIC PERSPECTIVE	CONTEXTUALISTIC PERSPECTIVE
Goals:	**Goals:**
-The learning of simpler processes in reading and writing as building blocks for more complex reading and writing later. -Units of language: Letters, letter/sound relationships, words separate from stories, text -Tests on discrete subskills -Emphasis on phonics and vocabulary development isolated from application -Important to recognize words accurately -Reading processes are separate from writing -Important to spell, punctuate, capitalize words, and know topic sentences in order to write -To comprehend students must know all words in a selection	-The learning of complex thinking processes in the context of authentic, whole tasks -Units of language: sentences, paragraphs, whole stories, books, chapters, songs -Tests on amount and kind of information gained from comprehending texts -Important to understand what you are reading -Important to be motivated, interested in academic tasks -Reading and writing processes are intertwined -Important to recognize audience and purpose in writing -To comprehend, background knowledge activated, use of context clues, focus on purpose and making meaning.
Methods:	**Methods:**
-Basal- based and limited instruction. -Drill and practice on discrete isolated skills related to reading comprehension -Direct instruction used: "academic focus, precise sequencing of content, high pupil engagement, careful teacher monitoring, specific corrective feedback" (Duffy & Roehler, 1982, p. 35) -Writing sentences from spelling words.	-Basal- used but enriched with trade books -Numerous opportunities to connect reading and writing all day long. -Activation of background knowledge relevant to comprehension -Use of process writing activities (author's chair, peer tutoring, publishing) -Oral reading, silent reading, too.

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DIMENSION 2: TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL ROLE ..aspects

PERSONAL: What personal qualities should a good teacher have?

INTERACTIONS: What kind of interactions should a good teacher have with students over content as well as other aspects of students' lives?

RESPONSES TO DISTRICT CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS: How should teachers respond to district curricular expectations?

MECHANISTIC PERSPECTIVE	CONTEXTUALISTIC PERSPECTIVE
Personal:	**Personal:**
-Strong, positive, in charge not much allowance for student to shape social or academic context of classroom... more authoritarian than authoritative -High expectations -Recognizes the role of affect in learning: need for trust, self-concept, interest	-Strong, positive, in charge but allows for students to contribute... more authoritative than authoritarian -High expectations, derived with student -Recognizes the role of affect in learning: need for trust, self-concept, interest
Interactions:	**Interactions:**
-Teacher initiates, sustains and defines type, duration and scope of classroom interactions -Teacher responds to student misconceptions, guesses or mistakes in relation to his/her instructional goals. (Gerston, 1992) -Teacher needs to provide clarity of instruction (Gerston, 1992) -Interactions need to be controlled in order to assure student success -Best learning is active but students act on teacher defined activities and content	-Teacher initiates some interactions. Students also have control over some interactions like "Authors' Chair" -"Classroom routines engender shared understandings about meaning, forms and uses of literacy" (Rogoff in Englert & Palincsar, 1992) -Teacher fosters opportunities for students to participate in classroom conversations over texts (Englert & Palincsar, 199x) -Best learning is active: students and teachers are involved in the processes
Curricular Expectations:	**Curricular Expectations:**

-Progress is measured against externally (outside the classroom) constructed and externally controlled set of standards (Heshusius, 1991). -Criteria for problem selection and evaluation is derived form an external set of standards (Heshusius, 1991).	-Progress is measured against internal (teacher and student) constructed and controlled set of standards . -Problems are selected and evaluated on the basis of classroom goals and objectives (Graves, Englert & Palincsar)

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DIMENSION 3: STUDENT LEARNER ROLE.....aspects

PERSONAL: What kind of personal qualities does a student need to be a successful learner?
What personal qualities hinder learning?

COGNITIVE: What kind of cognitive processes are children using as they acquire literacy?
What kind of background knowledge do students bring to tasks?

INTERACTIVE: What kind of collaborative activities does the teacher describe?
What is the role of social interaction in students' learning literacy?
What reasons does the teacher give for student participation in a peer's learning?

MECHANISTIC PERSPECTIVE	CONTEXTUALISTIC PERSPECTIVE
Personal:	**Personal:**
-Listen, absorb information -Motivated by rewards- extrinsic factors -Respond to teaching -Feels necessary to conform to classroom and school expectations at expense of cultural and ethnic heritage	-Act, integrate and reconstruct meanings -Motivated by being in a trusting environment -Motivated by challenge -Feels valued for unique qualities that can contribute to class from individual, ethnic and cultural background.
Cognitive:	**Cognitive:**
-Recite, reinforce, copy, memorize: important methods of learning -Drill and practice essential -Focus on future application -Segment learning into parts through task analysis (Poplin, 1988) -Little attention paid to background knowledge (meaning is in the text not in the person-text interaction) (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991) -Errors only important in relation to external standards students need to know (Heshusius, 1991)	-Converse, reply, exchange ideas -Considerable amount of attention paid to background knowledge (meaning is created through the interaction of text and audience) (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991) -Move from known to new, transformative (Poplin, 1988) -Think, understand (unobservable changes are possible) -Focus on present engagement and involvement -Errors are critical in the path to individual learning (Poplin, 1988)
Interactive:	**Interactive:**

-Peer tutoring acceptable because one student informs another of the information -Downplays academic content that students can learn from one another. -Highlight social/behavioral or motivational gains in cooperative learning.	-Peer tutoring, cooperative groups, collaborative problem-solving: variety of interactive formats with peers evident. -Highlights the social and academic gains achieved with interactive learning among peers.

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DIMENSION 4: CONTEXT.....aspects

SOCIAL CONTEXT OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION:

What is the extent to which the teacher includes social goals in her/his talk about other goals?

What is the extent to which the teacher describes methods and materials in terms of their contribution to the social cohesion (communication, flow, predictability of human interactions) in the classroom?

IMPACT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CONTEXT ON INSTRUCTION

To what extent do teachers include the parents in classroom activities and experiences?

How do the teacher's describe the student's background knowledge, ethnicity and economic status?

How do the teachers view the literacy experience the children bring to school?

What is the extent to which teacher's modify their instruction in relation to the student's background knowledge, ethnicity and economic status?

MECHANISTIC PERSPECTIVE	CONTEXTUALISTIC PERSPECTIVE
Social Context of Instruction:	**Social Context of Instruction:**
-Learning is most efficient under tightly controlled conditions (Poplin, 1988). -Emphasis on prediction and control in classroom environment (Altman & Rogoff, 1987) -Social goals, if mentioned, unrelated to academic gains.	-Mutual transactions exist between organism and classroom environment (Piaget, 19xx; Altman & Rogoff, 1987) -Learners learn best from people they trust (Poplin, 1988) -Social goals integral, reciprocal, connected and related to academic goals -Management provides predictability and structure that students personally need in their lives
Neighborhood Social Context:	**Neighborhood Social Context:**
-Important to involve parents so that they can reinforce school learning expectations -Literacy learning needs to prepare students to succeed in the regular society. -Students need to learn standard English.	-Important to involve parents because we are concerned about the whole child. Parents can reinforce and extend what is happening at school. -Literacy learning needs to be personally and culturally relevant to a student (Poplin, 1988) -Students need to know how to bridge from the language they know to standard English.

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FIGURE 3
The four dimensions of literacy teaching and learning including definition, aspects and examples

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DIMENSION #1 CONTENT..... definition, aspects, examples.

The content dimension is defined as those goals and methods which are designed to impart a body of knowledge and experience to students about literacy. The content dimension of literacy learning and teaching is divided into two aspects: goals and methods. Literacy learning and teaching reaches beyond the traditional learning to read and write. The listening, writing, speaking and reading goals and methods will be included in this dimension.

A goal is any statement that refers to that which the teacher intends the student to learn. An instructional goal is an intended outcome of instruction. It is what the teacher expects the students to know when they walk out of the door. Teachers may state several reasons why they chose these goals. The reasons as well as the goals themselves will be included in this section.

Examples of literacy goals:
Knowledge of skills, strategies, phonics, comprehension skills,
Knowledge of purposes of reading, writing
Knowledge of mechanics of reading, writing
Knowledge of study strategies (ways to regulate own behavior)
Knowledge of need to communicate with others
Knowledge of metacognitive strategies
Knowledge of subject matter
Experience with a variety of literacy formats (poetry, newspapers)

An instructional method is any teacher statement that refers to strategies, techniques, activities and practices which a teacher uses in teaching literacy. Teachers often state several reasons why they use these methods. The reasons as well as the methods themselves will be included in this description. The methods might be evident in descriptions of:

-an activity or a series of activities that children would do;
-a type of instructional technique that the teacher uses;
-the materials that would support accomplishment of the goals.

Some examples of literacy methods are:

-daily oral language activities
-typical reading/writing activities- use of basal, spelling, copying sentences,
-short-term activities (daily, repetitive)
-long-term activities and projects (over several days or weeks)
-teacher lecture-discussion
-cooperative activities, peer tutoring
-writing books, journals
-use of the basal
-use of literature
-field trips and related activities

Dimension 1: CONTENT. In the interview there are certain questions which were designed to focus the interviewee on the first dimension. These were:

1.2.a.. (and Dimension 3) What would you say about the children?

1.2.c. What is most important for this new teacher to think about teaching these children reading and writing? Is there anything different about teaching reading rather than writing?
1.2.d. (and Dimension 4) What about teaching reading and writing at Simpson ? Do you speculate that there are some differences?
READING
2. Please tell me about teaching reading at Washington Elementary.

2.1.What is important to do as a reading teacher?
2.2.When you think about teaching students how to read, what do these children need to know to be successful?
2.3. When do your students read in your class?
2.4 . How would you describe your reading program?
2.5. What are your goals for reading instruction?
2. 6. What specific skills do you want your children to have before they leave your room for the year?
WRITING
3. Please tell me about teaching writing at Washington Elementary.
3.1..b.How frequently?
3.1.a.What type of writing do they do?
3.1.c. What kinds of things do you teach the children (about writing)?
3.1 When do your students write in your class?
3.2 What are your goals for writing instruction?
3.4. What specific skills in writing do you think your students should learn before they leave your room for the year? Is phonics and vocabulary development important to your teaching of reading?

8.1.(and Dimension 4)
"Some people have suggested that the economically disadvantaged African-American children in urban settings need direct, explicit instruction in reading and writing that focuses on phonics and vocabulary development. Only after teachers have provided this fundamental direct instruction, then, should the teacher consider other things like having students read literature or participate in cooperative groups."

a. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Why not?

9.1..**Dialogue Analysis Questions:**
a. What is the difference between these dialogues?
b. Which one of these dialogues is more likely to occur in your classroom?
c. Which one teaches the student what he or she needs to know to be a successful reader?

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DIMENSION 2: TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL ROLE. ..definition, aspects, examples

The teacher instructional role dimension focuses on how teachers view their own role in literacy learning and teaching. The reasons that a teacher gives for having these qualities will also be included. There are three aspects to this dimension:
PERSONAL -what personal qualities should a good teacher have,
INTERACTIONS-what kind of interactions should a good teacher have with students over content as well as other aspects of student's lives,
CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS
-how important is the teacher's role in student learning (efficacy)
-what kinds of things are teachers responsible for?

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For example, a respondent may say,
PERSONAL: -"takes her job seriously"
-"build that self-esteem"
INTERACTIONS -"provide experiences"; "Teachers need the total group listening"
CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS
"Teachers need to plan and to motivate students."
"Get good grades on the California Achievement Test"

1.1. I recognize that this is a big question. But, I am interested in what you think about being a teacher at this school. Please tell me about what it is like to teach school at Washington Elementary.
1.2. (and Dimension 4) Assume that there is a new teacher at Washington Elementary. She is certainly not new to teaching; she has been working in Simpson for several years. However, she is new to Washington Elementary. She approaches you to get some information about working at this school. What would you tell this teacher tell about what is important to know about teaching at Washington Elementary?
1.2.b. (and Dimension 4) How would teaching at Washington Elementary be different from teaching say at Simpson?
1.2.e. What would be a great mistake to do in your first year here?
1.2.f. What advice would you give this teacher in making sure that things run smoothly?
1.3. How would you describe a good teacher at Washington Elementary?
1.3.a What are the characteristics of a good teacher of urban economically disadvantaged African-American students?
4. What role do you feel you play in student learning to read? How about learning to write?
(4.1.-new) What do you do that most helps students learn to read? to write?
4.1. Is it similar to a role you might play in another school, say like in Simpson?
6. (and Dimension 4) What kinds of things do you intentionally do to make sure the classroom lessons run smoothly?
6.1. (and Dimension 4) What kind of management ideas are important to remember when teaching reading? writing?
6.2. (and Dimension 4) What role does classroom management play in your teaching day?

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DIMENSION 3: STUDENT LEARNER ROLE...definition, aspects, examples

The student learner role is defined as those behaviors, attitudes, and orientations that the teacher describes which contribute to or hinder learning. The reasons that a teacher gives will also be included in this definition. There are three aspects to this dimension:
PERSONAL
-what kind of personal qualities does a student need to be a successful learner; what personal qualities hinder learning?
COGNITIVE
-what kind of cognitive processes are ocurring when students acquire literacy?
INTERACTIVE
-what kind of collaborative literacy activities does the teacher describe
-what can students learn from other students
-what reasons does the teacher give for student participation in a peer's learning.

1.2.a. (and Dimension 1) What would you say about the children?
5. What role do students play in their own learning to read? to write?

(5.1.-new) What do students themselves do that most helps them to learn to read? to write?

5.1. Do your students ever work in collaborative groups in reading? in writing?
5.1.a. What are the benefits of collaborative grouping?
5.2. What do children need to know to be successful in reading in collaborative groups?
5.3. How about success in learning to write in collaborative groups?

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DIMENSION 4: CONTEXT.....definitions, aspects, examples

The context dimension focuses on two aspects of context which influence literacy teaching and learning- classroom social context and the neighborhood context.

The classroom social context includes the people, materials and setting in which instruction proceeds. The social context is created by combination of both the social and academic goals and methods in the classroom. In terms of teacher viewpoints, there are two aspects of the classroom social context:
GOALS: The extent to which the teacher includes social goals in her or his talk about other goals.
METHODS: The extent to which the teacher describes methods and materials in terms of their contribution to the social cohesion of the classroom.

Examples would be:
"Teach the children that school is not play. They can play at home."
"I have a management system. I have my rules... I give them the evil eye."

The neighborhood context is the setting in which the children live. Since literacy learning and teaching is not limited to reading and writing, it is important to note instances where the teacher describes the children's neighborhood background as influencial in literacy learning. This dimension focuses on how teachers view the neighborhood context and how that context impacts their classroom literacy instruction. There are several aspects to this dimension:
COMPARATIVE:
-how is teaching at Washington Elementary different from teaching at another school

ROLE OF STUDENT BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN TEACHING:
-how do the teacher's describe and account for the student's background knowledge, ethnicity and economic status
-how do the teacher's view the language that African-American children bring to the school
-what do the teachers say about the parents.

4..1.2. (and Dimension 2) Assume that there is a new teacher at Washington Elementary. She is certainly not new to teaching; she has been working in Simpson for several years. However, she is new to Washington Elementary. She approaches you to get some information about working at this school. What would you tell this teacher tell about what is important to know about teaching at Washington Elementary?

4..1.2.b. (and Dimension 2) How would teaching at Washington Elementary be different from teaching say at Simpson?

4..1.2.d. (and Dimension 1)What about teaching reading and writing at Simpson? Do you speculate that there are some differences?

4..6. (and Dimension 2) What kinds of things do you intentionally do to make sure the classroom lessons run smoothly?

4..6.1. (and Dimension 2) What kind of management ideas are important to remember when teaching reading? writing?

4..6.2. (and Dimension 2) What role does classroom management play in your teaching day?

4..6.3. (and Dimension 2) What role does social development play in your curriculum? (4..6.3.-new) How much attention do you give to teaching students how to get along? Why?

4..8.1.(and Dimension 1)"Some people have suggested that the economically disadvantaged African-American children in urban settings need direct, explicit instruction in reading and writing that focuses on phonics and vocabulary development. Only after teachers have provided this fundamental direct instruction, then, should the teacher consider other things like having students read literature or participate in cooperative groups."

a. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Why not?

4..8.2. "Some people have suggested that economically disadvantaged African-American children in urban settings come to school with a strong oral tradition. These children know a lot about language through speaking. Yet, schools evaluate the students' performance on their ability to respond in writing not their oral language. Some people criticize these schools for trying to make the African-American student white."

a. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Why not?

4..8.3. "Some people say that teachers need to take into account a child's cultural and linguistic background when teaching reading and writing."

a. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Table 1
Mean teacher scores on the Modified-Theoretical Orientation toward Reading
Ranked by Orientation toward Reductionistic Goals and Methods

Rank	Teacher	Summary score
1.	D	147.
2.	L	129.
3.	G	128.
4.	C	127.
5.	A	126.
6.	N	123.
7.	P	120.
8.	K	117.
9.	Q	116.
10.	H	112.
11.	E	109.
12.	F	107.
13.	M	107.
14.	B	106.

Entire population Mean 119.5 (S. D. 11.427) Missing cases= 3: Teachers J, R, S

Table 2
Mean teacher responses to the Student Autonomy Scale
Ranked by High Student Autonomy Score

Rank	Teacher	Score
1.	H	56.
2.	B	50.
3.	C	42.
4.	F	41.
5.	M	40.
6.	P	39.
7.	G	31.
8.	R	22.
9.	A	21.
10.	K	16.
11.	E	2.
12.	L	-5.
13.	D	-13.

Entire population 26.31 (21.50) 13 cases Missing cases= 4: Teachers J,N,R, Q

Table 3
Correlation between Student Autonomy Scale and M-TORP

r= -.7226**

(**-Signif. LE .01 Two-tailed)

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Table 4

DIMENSION 1: CONTENT Aspects:	GOALS	METHODS
MECHANISM	••	••
CONTEXTUALISM		

DIMENSION 2: TEACHER ROLE Aspects:	Personal	Interact	Curricular Expectations
MECHANISM	••	••	••
CONTEXTUALISM	••	••	

DIMENSION 3: STUDENT ROLE Aspects:	Personal	Cognitive	Peer Interactions
MECHANISM	••	••	••
CONTEXTUALISM			

DIMENSION 4: CONTEXT Aspects:	Classroom	Neighborhood
MECHANISM	••	••
CONTEXTUALISM	••	

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